

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Original) A process for producing foam beads from thermoplastic polymers, encompassing the stages of
  - a) addition of a blowing agent to a thermoplastic polymer melt,
  - b) cooling and extrusion, through a die, of the polymer melt comprising blowing agent,
  - c) cutting of the polymer melt comprising blowing agent downstream of the die at reduced pressure with foaming to give foam beads,which comprises using a blowing agent in which water and a solubilizer or adsorbent are present.
2. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the solubilizer used comprises an aliphatic alcohol, ketone, ether, or ester.
3. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in claim 1 ~~or 2~~, wherein the adsorbent used comprises aluminum hydroxide, phyllosilicate, or zeolite.
4. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1, wherein the blowing agent also comprises CO<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>, or an aliphatic, halogenated, or halogen-free hydrocarbon.
5. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 4, wherein the blowing agent used comprises a mixture of
  - from 0.1 to 3% by weight of water,
  - from 0.1 to 3% by weight of an alcohol or ketone, and
  - from 1 to 10% by weight of an aliphatic, halogenated, or halogen-free hydrocarbon, or CO<sub>2</sub>.
6. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic polymer used comprises polystyrene, styrene copolymers, polyethylene, polypropylene, or a mixture of these.

7. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 to 6~~ claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic polymer has a bi -or multimodal molecular weight distribution.
8. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic polymer used comprises polystyrene with a polydispersity  $M_w/M_n$  of at least 2.5.
9. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 to 8~~ claim 1, wherein, prior to or after addition of the blowing agent, an IR absorber is added to the thermoplastic polymer melt.
10. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 9, wherein the IR absorber used comprises from 0.1 to 2.5% by weight based on the thermoplastic polymer melt, of graphite, carbon black, or aluminum powder.
11. (New) A process as claimed in claim 2, wherein the adsorbent used comprises aluminum hydroxide, phyllosilicate, or zeolite.
12. (New) A process as claimed in claim 2, wherein the blowing agent also comprises  $CO_2$ ,  $N_2$ , or an aliphatic, halogenated, or halogen-free hydrocarbon.
13. (New) A process as claimed in claim 3, wherein the blowing agent also comprises  $CO_2$ ,  $N_2$ , or an aliphatic, halogenated, or halogen-free hydrocarbon.
14. (New) A process as claimed in claim 2, wherein the thermoplastic polymer used comprises polystyrene, styrene copolymers, polyethylene, polypropylene, or a mixture of these.
15. (New) A process as claimed in claim 3, wherein the thermoplastic polymer used comprises polystyrene, styrene copolymers, polyethylene, polypropylene, or a mixture of these.

16. (New) A process as claimed in claim 4, wherein the thermoplastic polymer used comprises polystyrene, styrene copolymers, polyethylene, polypropylene, or a mixture of these.
17. (New) A process as claimed in claim 5, wherein the thermoplastic polymer used comprises polystyrene, styrene copolymers, polyethylene, polypropylene, or a mixture of these.
18. (New) A process as claimed in claim 2, wherein the thermoplastic polymer has a bi- or multimodal molecular weight distribution.
19. (New) A process as claimed in claim 3, wherein the thermoplastic polymer has a bi- or multimodal molecular weight distribution.
20. (New) A process as claimed in claim 4, wherein the thermoplastic polymer has a bi- or multimodal molecular weight distribution.